

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Joseph DiZoglio Jr., MD and I am a practicing physician who lives and works in Hartford, Connecticut. I am also a member of Connecticut's Democratic Socialists of America.

I strongly support HB 6616: "An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status", which would expand HUSKY coverage up to age 26 and marks a vital step towards ensuring everyone in Connecticut has access to healthcare, regardless of their immigration status.

My mom is an immigrant from Poland in the late 1980s who arrived with nothing but a return ticket she never used. I believe supporting this bill is a way to pay-it-forward to current immigrant communities who need support as they live in our state.

As a practicing gynecologist, I have also seen and studied how a lack of insurance harms young patients and makes them more likely to have untreated medical conditions or unfilled prescriptions.¹ Immigrant women as well as trans and gender-nonbinary individuals will all require regular gynecologic care in their early 20's. This might include access to birth control so they can decide when and how they wish to build a family. It also includes screening for cervical cancer or treatment for common gynecologic conditions like bacteria vaginosis or abnormal periods. Lastly, when young-adult patients visit their gynecologist regularly, they can build a trusting and stable relationship with the healthcare system that fosters lifelong healthy habits like quitting smoking and getting regular exercise. The best way we can set up these young people for success is to give them access to the full features of Connecticut's Medicaid.

I do not worry that this is an undue cost on the Medicaid system. By giving young people access to preventative medicine, we avoid the pitfalls of later expensive care and emergency services or surgery. The data is clear that prior Medicaid expansions since the passage of the ACA have helped newly insured patients achieve greater financial stability.^{2,3} We also know that expanding Medicaid does not have negative

¹ Cohen RA, Bloom B. Access to and utilization of medical care for young adults ages 20-29 years: United States, 2008. NCHS Data Brief. 2010 Feb;(29):1-8. PMID: 20184789.

² Dussault N, Pinkovskiy M, Zafar B. Is health insurance good for your financial health? Federal Reserve Bank of New York. <http://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2016/06/is-health-insurance-good-for-your-financial-health.html>. Published June 6, 2016. Accessed June 14, 2016.

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Hu L, Kaestner R, Mazumder B, Miller S, Wong A. The effect of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act Medicaid expansions on financial well-being [NBER working paper No. 22170]. National Bureau of Economic Research. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w22170>. Published April 2016. Accessed June 14, 2016.

effects on the job market.⁴ I find it reasonable to suspect that expanding access to this subset of the state's population will have similar results. More importantly, the moral imperative of expanding Medicaid access to undocumented young adults means that healthcare workers can be proud to provide care to all the young people who enter their office without stigma or shame of documentation status.

I strongly support HB 6616 and urge you to pass the expansion of HUSKY to patients up to age 26 this year as we work towards ensuring immigrants of all ages have health insurance.

Sincerely,

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⁴ Kaestner R, Garrett B, Gangopadhyaya A, Fleming C. Effects of the ACA Medicaid expansions on health insurance coverage and labor supply [NBER working paper No. 21836]. National Bureau of Economic Research. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w21836>. Published December 2015. Accessed June 14, 2016.